TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT IN EDMONTON

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by

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IMPORTANT NOTE

This Technical Paper has been prepared by the Statutory Planning Unit, Long Range Planning Branch, Planning and Building Department. The Paper documents research results as part of an ongoing forecasting activity. Neither the methods nor the results have been endorsed by the City of Edmonton.

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I INTRODUCTION

The current state of town centres in Edmonton brings into question the relevancy of 1980 General Municipal Plan (GMP) policies. This paper examines the town centre concept as originally proposed, as presently existing, and seeks to provide a discussion base for future policy directions for the GMP review.

Suburban town centres, which were intended to be regional activity centres for area residents, have only been partially realized in Edmonton, yet the concept of a town centre is a fundamental land use planning principle for Edmonton suburban areas. The centres were expected to provide a primary focal point for suburban residents, offering shopping, employment, recreation and public transit close to home.

The growth strategy outlined in the General Municipal Plan called for a total of ten town centres to be built. However, only four sites: West Edmonton, Heritage, Castle Downs, and Mill Woods have been developed, each with a very limited range of uses. One of the major anticipated employment components, suburban office space, has not developed at any of the four sites, and now appears as an unlikely use.

The slow, uneven growth of suburban town centres is significant for several reasons:

1. The concept remains a crucial feature of suburban planning in Edmonton. Suburban land use allocations and decisions on numerous development applications consider the potential impact on town centre development.

2. The suburbs are Edmonton's major residential population growth areas. If a key feature of the suburban area is not developing as planned, the suburbs may not function as anticipated in terms of residential, employment and recreational opportunities.

3. Appropriate land uses for large vacant sites may remain indeterminant.

Section II, following, provides the policy framework on which the town centre concept is based. Reference is made to the General Municipal Plan and individual area structure plans. Section III is a generalized discussion of town centres, providing case examples from other Canadian centres. Section IV looks at the development of Edmonton town centres relative to original area structure plans and the GMP. Section V provides conclusions and recommends future policy directions.

II POLICY CONTEXT

The following is an overview of the town centre concept outlined in the General Municipal Plan (GMP) and relevant Area Structure Plans. The concept is crucial in implementing the GMP's Growth Strategy, and providing the ongoing principle for development in suburban areas.

Increasing the compactness of residential development and decentralizing office space to suburban locations are elements of the GMP Growth Strategy that rely heavily on the town centre concept. Office decentralization, in particular, was seen as a way to avoid sterility at the downtown street level, disperse the flow of commuters and enhance outlying centres of activity.

Map 1 (GMP Map 6.3) identifies the generalized location for town centres in suburban and annexed areas. The map also differentiates in terms of size between centres having regional order shopping facilities (Heritage, West Edmonton) and those having smaller retail components (Castle Downs). Future locations are specifically designated in the case of Mill Woods, Clareview, and the Lake District, and generally designated for the annexed areas. The characteristics of specific centres are outlined in individual area structure plans. Since the approval of the GMP, the Ellerslie town centre in the southeast has been designated by an approved Area Structure Plan.

GENERAL MUNICIPAL PLAN POLICIES

Town centres, by providing a regional activity focus for suburban residents, are intended to support several policy objectives. The decentralization of office functions was a means to increase the number and variety of employment opportunities in the suburbs, promoting a more balanced use of public transit and the road networks. In turn, increased office activity would provide an additional market for the associated retail and service uses. Higher density residential developments and associated recreational opportunities would contribute to compact development objectives. The combination of uses would represent an efficient, integrated development as opposed to continued suburban sprawl.

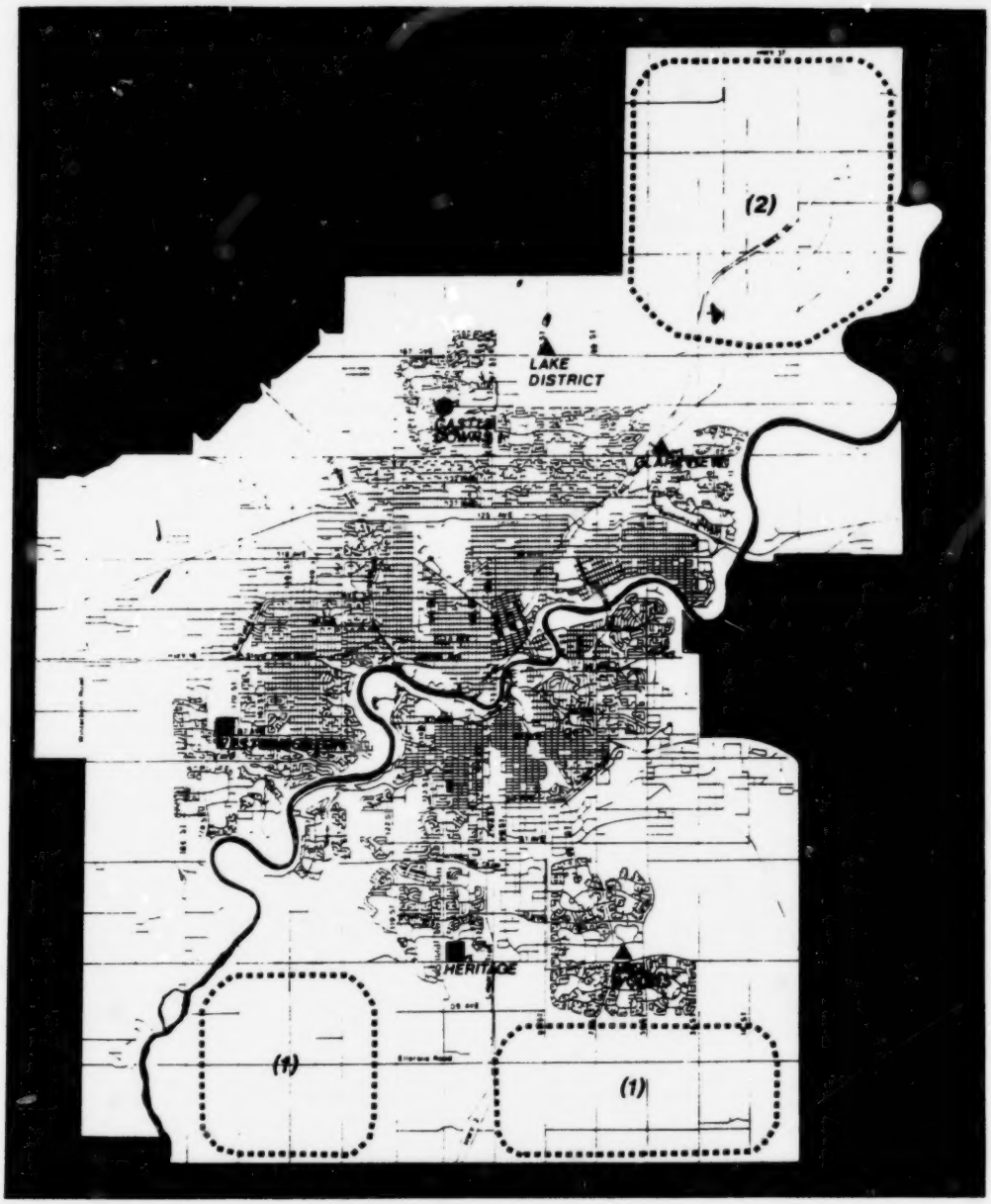
Policy 6.E.1 of the General Municipal Plan provides a number of guidelines for the development of town centres. The mixture of uses should include:

(1) a regional shopping centre;

A retail component of regional size is intended to act as a focal point for the town centre. The General Municipal Plan defines "regionally significant" as having a Gross Leasable Area (GLA) of 20,000 square metres or more, based on existing centres (Policy Report #6, 6.E.4, par. 3 Vol. II)

(2) a significant office component;

The decentralization of office space from downtown locations forms an important component of the Growth Strategy (Point 8, Part 1, Vol. 1). While the amount of office space in the Downtown is expected to increase, the Plan projects its share of the total office space to decline in favor of town centres, other transportation nodes, and existing regional shopping centres. The primary trade area of a town centre is estimated to support approximately 20,000 square metres of office space (Policy Report #6, 6.A.3, Vol. II), and town centres are expected to accommodate 10-15 % of total office floorspace growth during 1976-91.



Map.1.

TOWN CENTRE LOCATIONS

TOWN CENTRE

- ■ – with regional order shopping mall
- ● – with smaller retail facility

FUTURE TOWN CENTRE

- ▲ – locations identified in approved Area Structure Plans or Outline Plans
- ⬚ – areas in which locations are to be identified in future Area Structure Plans (Number of Town Centres in Parentheses)

This map represents a broad and conceptual illustration of the desired locations for Town Centres. It is not intended to provide site-specific direction to land use regulation mechanisms.

Source: General Municipal Plan Map 6.3

PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT

(3) a substantial amount of housing;

This component of the town centre concept is to provide further support for the retail component, and increased transit patronage for work-related trips to the downtown. Although the Residential policy section of the Plan does not refer directly to town centres, higher density residential developments are to be adjacent to "activity centres" which would include the designated town centres. Increased residential density is to be limited to a radius of 365 metres of such an activity centre. Within this area, heights are permitted to a maximum of 45 metres (Policy Report #5, 5.B.6, par. 1, Vol. II).

(4) landscaped outdoor areas;

As part of the multi-use concept, recreational facilities are to be planned in conjunction with the town centre. The centre's importance and distinctive identity is to be reflected in special design and landscaping treatments of amenity areas. (Policy Report #13, 15.B.5, Vol. II)

(5) a transit centre;

A major benefit attributed to the town centre concept relates to the anticipated increase in the efficiency of the city transportation network. The provision of a transit centre is important to cope effectively with the large number of trips generated by the retail, office and housing components of the centre, and to enhance the centre's role as a focal point.

A further point emphasized in the Plan is the benefit of advance site planning for the centre. While it is possible to add additional uses to an existing regional shopping centre, this was felt to produce a more awkward layout than if the development were planned as a comprehensive unit. General design guidelines for town centres are specified in Policy 6.E.6 of the Plan.

The decentralization of office space to centres outside the downtown was an important part of the Plan's growth strategy. By providing a multitude of uses at one location, the centre was to become a focal point for the community. Of the various components: retail, office, housing, recreation and transit, the retail component was felt to be most critical to the success of the centre. The GMP acknowledges that the development of independent regional shopping centres within the trade areas of the proposed town centres would later limit the viability of the planned retail components. The development of Westgate (West Edmonton Mall) and Londonderry are cited as having undermined the viability of the West Jasper Place and Clareview town centres, respectively. The Plan stresses that if the town centre concept is to be effectively supported, then strict regulation of regional shopping centres will be required (Policy Report #6, 2.6, P. 6.7).

AREA STRUCTURE PLAN POLICIES

The six town centres, designated on Map 1 (GMP Map 6.3), exhibit significant differences in size, role and function, reflecting variations in individual area structure plans. The accompanying Table 1 presents a summary of town centre characteristics described in area structure plans adopted by Council between 1972 and 1984.

TABLE 1: PROPOSED TOWN CENTRES

	West Jasper Place (1972)	Kaskitayo (1973)	Castle Downs (1973)	Lake District (1979)	Clareview (1980)	Mill Woods Town Centre (1984)	Ellerslie (1984)	Notes
Area	64.7 ha	27 ha	16 ha	64.7 ha	129 ha	43.8 ha	60 - 70 ha	
Shopping Centre 1. Role 2. GLA 3. Area	1. Community 2.4 ha	1. Community 3. 8 ha	1. Community 3. 4.8 ha	1. Community 3. 24.2 ha	1. Community 2. 36,231 m^2 3. 15.9 ha	1. Regional 2. 74,320 m^2- 92,900 m^2 3. 24.2 ha	1. Regional 2. 74,320 m^2	- as described in each individual area structure plan
Freestanding Commercial Space 1 SQ M 2 Area	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2. 8.2 ha	N/A	
Office Space 1 SQ M. 2. Area	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1. 161,497 m^2 2. 33.5 ha		1. 69.675 m^2	
Residential 1. Units 2. Area 3. Density	2. 14.1 ha 3. 45 ppa	2. 28.3 ha	2. 12.9 ha	2. 40.4 ha 3. 30-45 ppa	1. 1,390 units 2. 12.5 ha 3. up to 60 upa	1. 12.81 units 2. 2.6 ha	N/A	
Other Facilities	Clinic Library Fire Station Police Schools adj.	Transit Centre Clinic Library Fire Station Schools	Clinic Library Theatre	Transit Centre Library Fire Station Park	Transit Centre Clinic Arena/Pool Schools Park	Transit Centre Hotel Schools adj.	Hotel Fire Station Park	
Site Plans	Conceptual	Generalized	Detailed	Conceptual	Detailed	Conceptual	Conceptual	- Conceptual site plans assign uses to general locations only. - Detailed site plans show building location and use.
Integration	- Described, but not detailed	- Described but not detailed - Residential, schools separate	- Minimal	- Described	- High; all components	- Commercial/ residential integrated; other components separate	- Minimal	- Integration is defined as the proportion of Town Centre components located on one site.

SOURCE: Individual Area Structure Plans/Neighbourhood Structure Plans as approved by Council.

The table illustrates the variation between plans. For example, areas designated for town centres range from a low of 16 hectares (40 acres) for Castle Downs to a high of 129 hectares (318 acres) for Clareview. Plans for the Castle Downs town centre called for a community level commercial component with some adjacent residential uses. Integration was minimal and site plans were illustrative only. In contrast, Clareview town centre called for a much larger commercial component, integrated with residential and office towers, transit station, schools and other uses. Site plans were detailed showing building locations and floor area ratio.

Earlier plans tended to have smaller commercial components with more emphasis on residential and institutional (municipal) uses. Later plans, and the General Municipal Plan, specify a regional commercial centre to be the key component. The Mill Woods town centre proposes 2.6 hectares (6.57 acres) of multi-family residential use, and the Ellerslie town centre plan deals with the commercial component only. This contrasts with the earlier plans which propose between 14 and 40 hectares (30-100 acres) of residential uses.

SUMMARY

Area structure plans identifying the series of town centres were developed over a period of twelve years. Variations in trade area and neighbourhood characteristics are reflected in the size, role and mix of uses proposed for any one town centre. Certain differences between centres are clearly recognized in the General Municipal Plan. Map 1 (GMP Map 6.3), for example, presents a hierarchy of centres having regional and smaller level retail facilities. Other characteristics are treated in a more generalized fashion and more uniformly applied.

Within the basic policy framework outlined in Policy 6.E.1 of the Plan, it is probable that the concept will be realized differently for each centre, depending on the nature of its trade area. Later phases of this study will examine in more detail differences between existing and planned centres.

III TOWN CENTRES AS PART OF THE CITY SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of town centres (multi-use developments) within an urban centre is a phenomenon which is largely a function of community size, and is also correlated with the community urban form. Most cities are a combination of four basic urban forms: concentric, multi-nodal, linear, and dispersed. The basic form has been realized differently depending on the scale of the urban centre. Larger centres tend to receive their share of growth in dispersed rather than central locations. At the middle scale, the existing trend is towards a concentric form with superimposed multi-nodal and linear variations. Edmonton, a mid-sized city, illustrates this trend very well.

The City of Edmonton represents a multi-nodal city combining the forces of concentration and dispersion. Expressways, arterial roads, and the LRT promote concentration, while networks of collector and local roads for automobiles promote dispersion. Economic forces and pressures on land in the inner city create incentives to establish business and institutional uses in other areas. Population growth and outward development create outlying markets which attract services and activities to the suburbs. These forces, pushing from the centre, and pulling from the suburbs act to reinforce the general outward distribution of uses, population and service networks as the city grows. The scale of the centre determines the magnitude of the forces and the degree of development attracted to outer nodes.

Shopping centres, as one type of activity node, have evolved from small centres following the direction of urban growth; to regional centres, which influence growth patterns; to the "mini-city" or town centre, a multi-use development, which becomes a social and entertainment focal point in addition to the retail function. The following section examines multi-use developments, generally, and as developing in other Canadian centres.

TOWN CENTRES: CASE EXAMPLES

Mixed use projects became prominent in the latter half of the 1970's. An Urban Land Institute (ULI) survey conducted in 1975 for North America identified 39 completed or virtually complete projects with 30 more under construction. By 1982, the ULI identified 82 completed projects, 72 under construction and 38 in serious planning. In terms of completed projects, this represents an increase of 85% over the seven year period.

Substantial benefits are attributed to the concept of multi-use developments, or town centres from both the private developer and public sector points of view. Some of these benefits were outlined in the General Municipal Plan. Other benefits may include: cost efficiencies in design and construction, long run stability and value of property, increased market access and availability. For example, two main objectives of the town centre proposed for Mill Woods are:

"(1) to comprehensively conceive the development such that the scale, mix and integration of project components will produce an end product more economically successful than if each element were programmed separately.

(2) the opportunity to better satisfy consumer needs and preference through offering the right mix and scale of goods and services with an overall land-use plan which is efficient, pleasing and exciting."[1]

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1. Commercial Opportunity Analysis, Mill Woods Town Centre, Edmonton, Alberta; Thomas Consultants Inc.; 1980.

The following examples illustrate how the concept has been implemented in other Canadian centres.

Greater Vancouver Regional District

The Liveable Region 1976/1986, a report produced by the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), contains proposals to manage and direct the growth of Greater Vancouver. The establishment of Regional Town Centres is put forward as one method in a five-part strategy for managing growth. By bringing jobs, shopping and cultural opportunities closer to where people live, Regional Town Centres are intended to moderate the trend of residents commuting from suburban locations to the City of Vancouver.

The report suggests that a town centre include a minimum of one million square feet of office space and generate $50 million in gross annual retail sales. They should also contain a varied but balanced mix of activities, public transit, a pedestrian orientation and reflect the local character and physical setting. It was recommended that four town centres be started by 1986. These were to be located in Burnaby, downtown New Westminster, Surrey and the Coquitlam area.

A second report: The Liveable Region from the 70's to the 80's (1980), analyzed the level of activity since the initial strategies were put in place. In the 1980 report, it was noted that suburban municipalities, and town centres, especially, failed to attract a significant amount of office development because of the continuing dominance of Downtown Vancouver, and the tendency for suburban office development to take place outside the town centres.

The designated town centres exhibited various stages of evolution. The Coquitlam Town Centre contained retail space with future plans for more retail, office space, a hotel, a park, a new civic building and medium density housing. Plans for Burnaby's Metrotown included office and retail space, a civic/institutional area, and medium/high density housing. Plans for the revitalization of the downtown in New Westminster were just underway.

The 925,000 square foot Guildford Shopping Centre remains the focal point of the Surrey town centre. The regional shopping centre has served as a catalyst to attract office development (over 100,000 square feet), and ancillary retail development in the form of convenience shopping plazas, car dealerships, furniture outlets and restaurants. The town centre has also promoted multiple family dwellings, including apartments and town houses.

Metropolitan Toronto

In the 1980 Official Plan for Metropolitan Toronto, suburban centres containing a mixture of uses were to play a specific role in meeting employment, transportation, housing and energy conservation goals. The Official Plan recognizes North York and Scarborough as major centres, and four other locations as intermediate centres. Activities proposed for all centres include retailing, offices, hotels, theatres, libraries, recreational facilities and other compatible uses. Intermediate centres were to be at a smaller scale. Scarborough Town Centre, a major centre, was intended to decentralize urban activities and provide a focal point for the community.

The first phase of the Scarborough Town Centre began in 1971 and included a 1.1 million square foot regional shopping centre and 300,000 square feet of office space containing the civic administration. Two additional office buildings were since added, and in 1983 construction began on an additional one million square feet of office space and a transit station. Presently in the planning stages are two projects comprising an additional one million square feet of office space.

SUMMARY

In most town centre developments, the retail component forms the dominant use. In fact, the shopping centre is typically the first phase of development, serving as a catalyst in attracting other uses. In the office space market, town centres are competing with downtown attractions, and an urban centre must reach a certain threshold level before a suburban town centre is able to compete favourably with downtown location factors.

In the GVRD example, all centres initially contained major shopping facilities. Difficulties were experienced in attracting a second level of use. The Scarborough Town Centre, on the other hand, is part of a much larger urban context, and had the additional impetus of a civic administration complex. Even so, its development is still ongoing. This experience suggests that multi-use developments tend to be long term projects, requiring phasing over many years due to the different market characteristics and levels of demand for each use. Such centres can be expected to develop only after an appropriate trade area has been established.

IV EDMONTON'S PLANNED TOWN CENTRES IN EDMONTON

Table 1 presented a summary of town centres as proposed by individual outline and area structure plans approved between 1972 and 1984. Differences in size, form and function were generally identified. The following section examines each centre individually in terms of its original proposal, and its future development prospects.

KASKITAYO

Heritage Mall, at the corner of 111 Street and 23 Avenue, was built on the site proposed for the Kaskitayo Town Centre. The mall is a regional level commercial centre containing 70,600 m^2 of business space and four major tenants.

Variation in the units specified in the outline plan and current available indicators make it difficult to precisely compare existing vs. planned land uses. In general, development has proceeded as planned. Table 2 shows a total of 27 ha (66.8 ac.) of commercial use specified by the plan. In 1985, 20.6 ha (49 ac.) had developed. Multi-family units were projected by the plan to occupy 28.3 ha (70 ac.). In 1985, 28.3 ha (70 ac.) of multi-family development were existing.[2]

The original outline plan called for the integration of commercial, higher density residential, transportation and institutional uses into one District Centre. Map 2, Existing Land Use shows a transit station located in the southeast corner of the site, and adjacent residential uses and recreational uses are planned in conjunction with school facilities proposed to the south. One of the institutional uses specifically identified in the plan: a fire station, has been developed 1.5 km to the east of the site. Other institutional uses cited in the plan have not developed. Office uses specified in Policy 6.E.1 of the General Plan were not identified in the original outline plan, and do not presently exist on site. This does not preclude the possibility of adding office or institutional space to the mall at some future date.

In general, the Kaskitayo Town Centre has been developed in accordance with the outline plan adopted by Council in 1973. It presently lacks the recreation and office components referred to in Policy 6.E.1 of the General Municipal Plan. Physically, the potential exists for future development of this nature, however studies of office space in the southeast indicate marginal feasibility for the foreseeable future, and therefore this use is unlikely.

WEST EDMONTON MALL

In 1972, an amended West Jasper Place Outline Plan approved by Edmonton City Council designated the Callingwood Town Centre as the site for a regional shopping facility. In 1973, approval was given to the commercial zoning of a 25 hectare (63 acre) site in Summerlea (West Edmonton Mall). The original town centre site in Callingwood was subsequently purchased by the owners of West Edmonton Mall, and approval granted in 1979 to rezone that property to high density residential. In this way, the role of West Edmonton Mall as the only regional shopping centre in West Jasper Place was determined.

The approval processes for West Edmonton Mall, Phases 1, 2 and 3; and West Edmonton Village, located on the original Callingwood Town Centre site have been lengthy and

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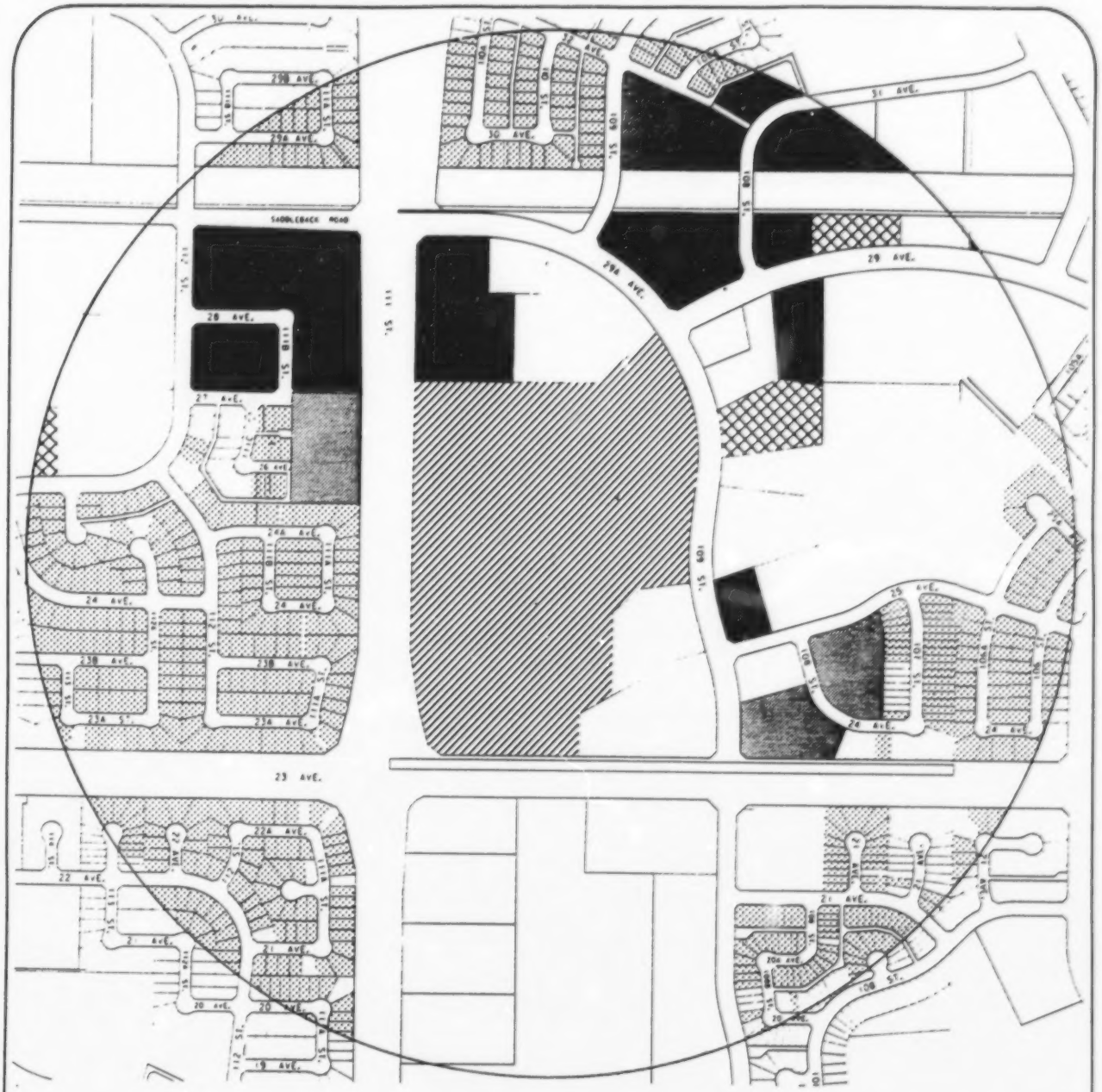
2. Plans Demonstration report; Kaskitayo Outline Plan Area, July, 1986; Planning and Building Department.



Map 2.

KASKITAYO TOWN CENTRE

- Single & Two Unit Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Apartments
- Commercial
- Institutional
- Industrial/Utilities
- Transportation
- Open Space/Recreational
- Agricultural/Undeveloped

N

PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT

Source: Plans Information System, May 1986

Map 3.

WEST EDMONTON MALL

- Single & Two Unit Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Apartments
- Commercial
- Institutional
- Industrial/Utilities
- Transportation
- Open Space/Recreational
- Agricultural/Undeveloped

N

PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT

Source: Plans Information System, May 1986

detailed. Discussions have involved several parties, including the Planning and Building Department, developer, MPC, area residents, and Council. At no time, however, has the original West Jasper Place Outline Plan been amended to establish new guidelines for a town centre on the West Edmonton Mall site. Each application has proceeded on its merits according to conditions set during the rezoning, subdivision and development agreement stages. It is therefore difficult to assess the existing development relative to the town centre concept as originally proposed for Callingwood, illustrated in Table 1.

The mall, however, does contain many of the town centre components outlined in Policy 6.E.1 of the General Municipal Plan. Map 3 shows the regional shopping centre, which contains 132,990 m^2 of business space, higher density residential uses in the immediate vicinity, recreational uses within the mall itself, and the transit centre. Office space is not present in the vicinity in any significant amount, although vacant land could be developed for this use at a future date. The Misericordia Hospital is located immediately to the east of the mall site, and represents a major activity centre independent of its proximity to the mall.

CASTLE DOWNS

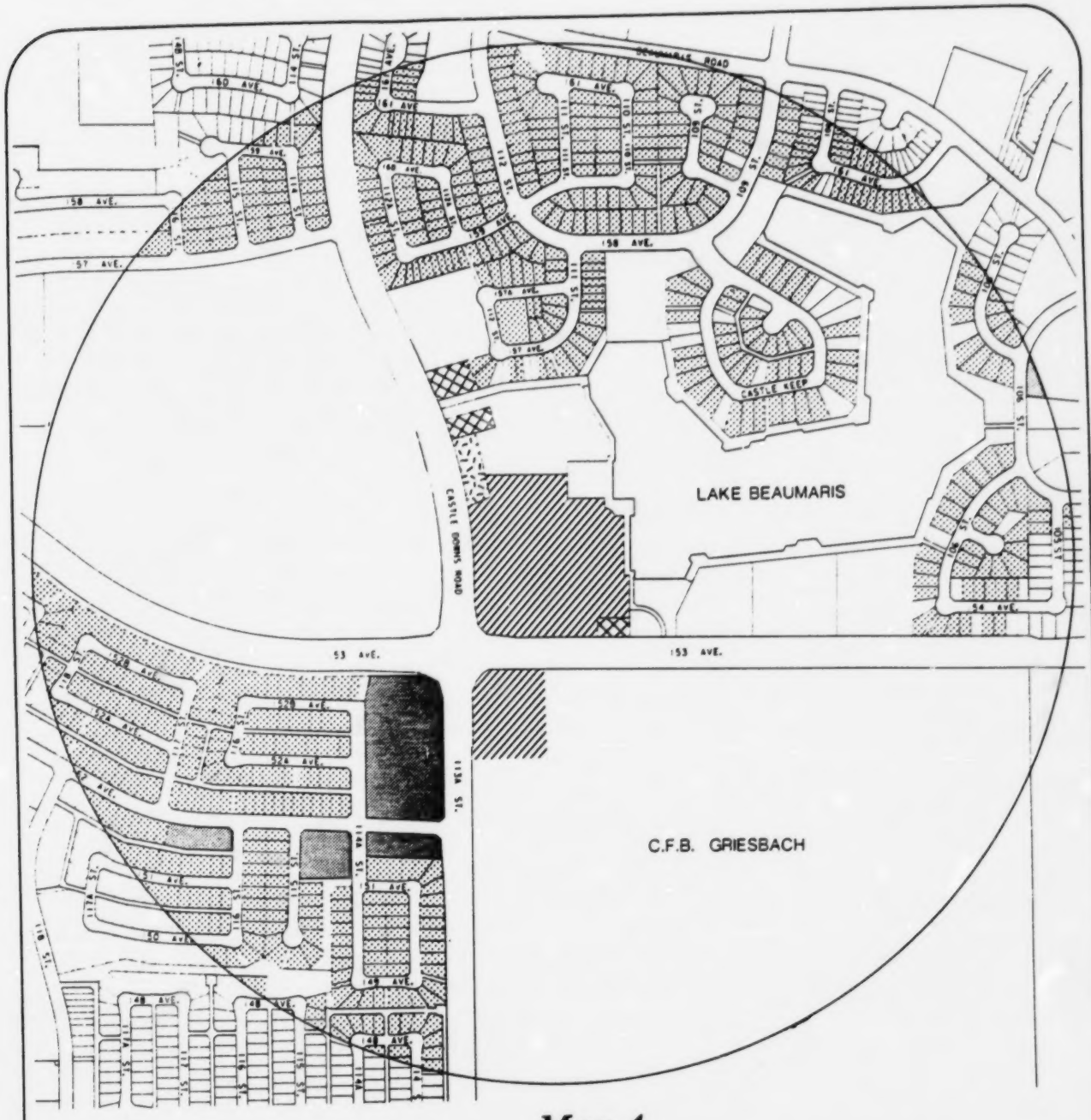
Lake Beaumaris Mall is located on the town centre site proposed in the Castle Downs Outline Plan. The mall is a community level centre, containing 9,685 m^2 of business space and having Safeway as its single major tenant. Map 4 shows institutional uses, including two churches, a fire station, and a transit station adjoining the shopping centre. Medium density residential uses have developed, as planned, north and east of the site. Passive recreational facilities are provided in the trails and park space surrounding Lake Beaumaris. Across the street to the west of the site, space is reserved for more active recreational facility development. An office-civic-residential component of 2.8 hectares (7 acres) was proposed in the Beaumaris Neighbourhood Outline Plan, however to date, no commercial office space development has taken place outside of medical facilities within the mall.

With the exception of the office space component, Lake Beaumaris Mall has developed as specified in the Castle Downs and Beaumaris Neighbourhood Outline Plans. Of the guidelines established in Policy 6.E.1 of the General Municipal Plan, the centre meets all but the office space requirement.

MILL WOODS

With an anticipated opening date of August, 1988, Phase I of the Mill Woods Town Centre is proposed to include 41,805 m^2 of retail space. Adjacent freestanding office, commercial and residential uses designated in the neighbourhood structure plan are not committed at this time. It is anticipated that opportunities for these uses will develop as the retail component and the hospital to the north are completed.

Higher density residential uses are present in the surrounding neighbourhoods of Kameyosek and Meyokumin; however, these uses are locally oriented. Such uses contribute to the trade area population but do not have direct impact on the centre. Additional medium and high density residential developments are proposed as part of the town centre site. Recreational opportunities exist west of the proposed centre as part of the Grant MacEwen College campus. A transit centre is proposed to be directly connected to the centre, and the hospital site under construction to the north.



Map 4.

CASTLE DOWNS TOWN CENTRE

- Single & Two Unit Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Apartments
- Commercial
- Institutional
- Industrial/Utilities
- Transportation
- Open Space/Recreational
- Agricultural/Undeveloped

N

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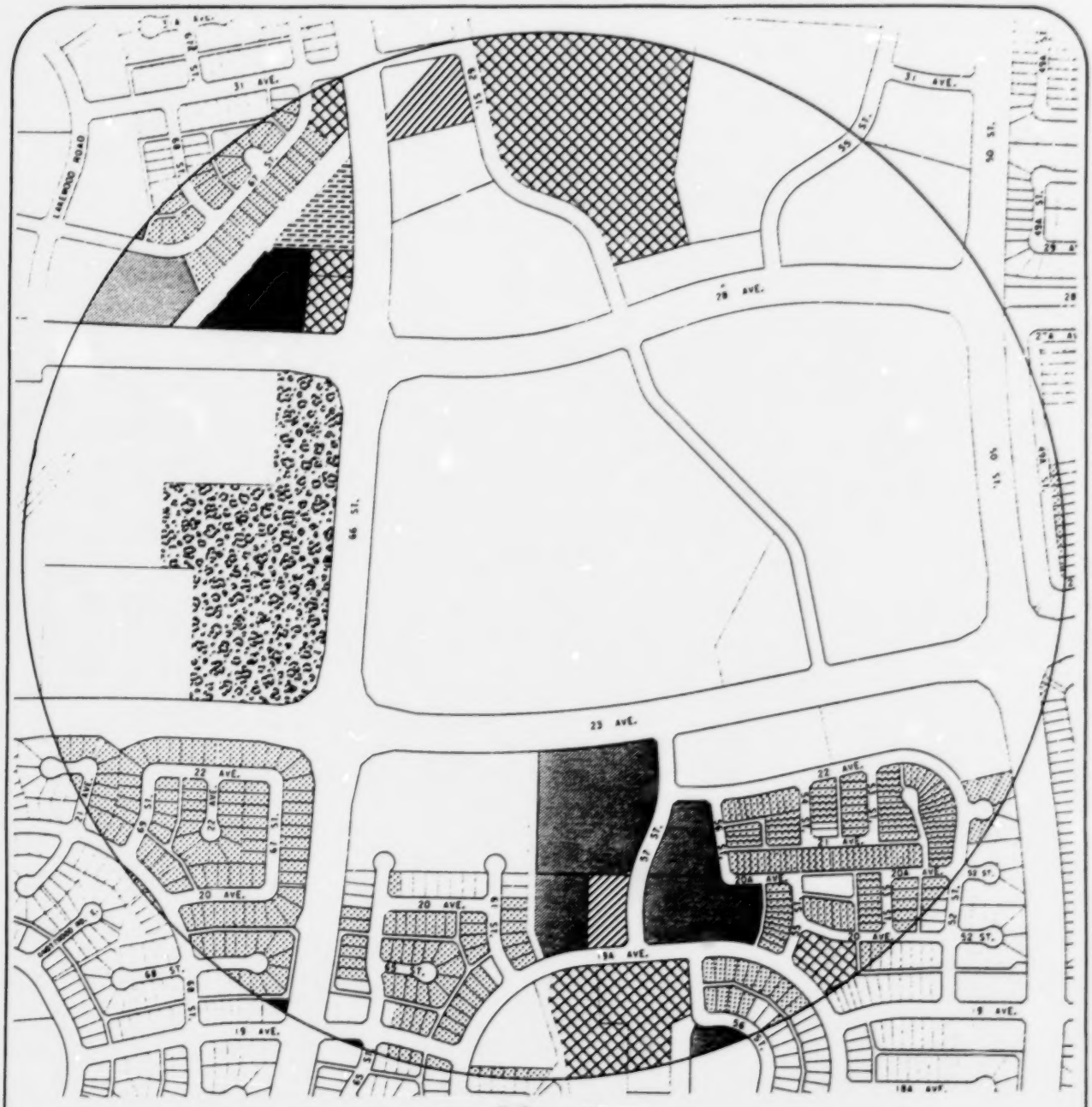
Source: Plans Information System, May 1986



Map 5.

MILL WOODS TOWN CENTRE

- Single & Two Unit Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Apartments
- Commercial
- Institutional
- Industrial/Utilities
- Transportation
- Open Space/Recreational
- Agricultural/Undeveloped

N

PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT

Source: Plans Information System, May 1986

A study of development potential for the Mill Woods town centre for the 1986-1998 period projects limited demand for office space in proximity to the centre.[3] The recently completed Tawa centre at the southeast corner of 66 Street and 31 Avenue has 4,180 m^2 of second storey office space. It is felt that an additional two buildings of similar size would be more than adequate to meet demand during this period.

In general, development is occurring in conformity with guidelines set out in the GMP and in the approved Neighbourhood Structure Plan. The timing of later phases will be based on economic and population growth rates within the trade area.

CLAREVIEW

The Clareview Town Centre Neighbourhood Area Structure Plan was adopted by Council in 1980. The town centre site was proposed to contain 129 hectares (318 acres) of land, located northeast of the junction of 137 Avenue and the Manning Freeway. Site plans identified locations for an integrated commercial/office and residential complex, adjacent educational/recreational uses served by transit facilities. Of these plans, only the transit station has been realized (Refer to Map 6).

The development and later expansion of Londonderry Mall has had a major effect on the potential viability of the Clareview Town Centre's retail component. Using assumptions built into the Planning Department's retail gravity model it appears that a retail centre of approximately 33,144 m^2 as originally proposed will not be feasible before the year 2005. Given demographic and income data for the trade area, and the close proximity to the Londonderry Mall, it is questionable whether a facility of such a size would ever be feasible. Indeed, the Londonderry location has attracted other town centre uses such as office space and institutional uses, which serve the same trade area.

A smaller retail centre having a neighbourhood orientation may become feasible on the town centre site by the year 2000. It seems likely that eventual development at this location will be substantially different from that proposed in the Clareview Outline Plan (1972) and will lack the regional retail and office components specified in Policy 6.E.1 of the General Municipal Plan.

THE LAKE DISTRICT

The Edmonton North (Lake District) Area Structure Plan, approved by Council in 1979, designated a town centre in the centre of the Plan area at the intersection of the major internal transportation routes. This centre was to serve a community of up to 55,000 people, and uses proposed included commercial, residential, recreational, civic and cultural facilities. A transit terminal capable of serving future LRT requirements was also specified.

A market study of the Lake District Town Centre prepared by Urbanics Consultants Ltd. in 1982 indicated the potential for a 38,553 m^2 regional centre by 1996.[4] Since then, population projections for the area have been revised downwards, and it now appears that a community shopping centre is the maximum that can be supported in the foreseeable future (after 1996). It is projected that the centre would contain a promotional department store, a major food store and associated smaller commercial units with a combined floor space of 13,900 - 23,200 m^2.

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3. Mill Woods Town Centre; Development Potential Study, Edmonton, Alberta; Development Consulting Group Ltd., October, 1986.

Map 6.

CLAREVIEW TOWN CENTRE

- Single & Two Unit Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Apartments
- Commercial
- Institutional
- Industrial/Utilities
- Transportation
- Open Space/Recreational
- Agricultural/Undeveloped

N

PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT

Source: Plans Information System, May 1986

At this time it is uncertain whether the other town centre components identified in Policy 6.E.1 of the General Municipal Plan would be viable at this location after construction of the retail facility.

ELLERSLIE

The Ellerslie Industrial Area Structure Plan was approved in 1984. It specifies a town centre having a regional retail component and a significant proportion of office space in addition to some institutional functions. Planning Department forecasts indicate that the residential portion of the Area Structure Plan will not receive significant levels of population before 1991. This makes a regional retail centre in this location difficult to justify until after the year 2000. Since the ultimate build-out population for the Ellerslie residential component will provide a more than adequate market for the retail component of a town centre, its viability is not in question, but rather the timing based on the development of an appropriate trade area.

SUMMARY

Each of the town centre locations identified appears able to support a retail component at some point, given the development of an appropriate residential trade area. None of the existing town centres contains the office space component originally specified in the GMP and local Area Structure Plans, although vacant space exists in all cases.

Findings from the feasibility study prepared for the Mill Woods Town Centre indicate limited suburban office potential for Edmonton during the 1986 - 1998 period.[5] Furthermore, evidence presented indicates that large business office buildings do not congregate around regional shopping centres having relatively small trade areas. Town centres in Mississauga and Scarborough containing substantial amounts of office space draw on populations of 365,000 and 475,000 respectively. In Edmonton, concentrations of business office space are more likely to develop adjacent to the CBD, or along high traffic arterials like the Calgary Trail. Once established, such concentrations tend to intensify through the benefits of agglomeration.

As a result of high vacancy rates in the downtown core, rents have fallen, reducing the difference between downtown and suburban occupancy costs. Consequently, the trends to decentralization has slowed drastically since the 1970's, when rapid economic growth created office space shortages in the downtown. Current economic forecasts suggest that downtown office space will continue to be in oversupply for the balance of the decade at least, and that little decentralization will occur.

Other town centre land use components such as institutional and recreational uses are subject to municipal policy decisions. In suburban areas, slower population growth has led to the deferral of institutional and recreational facility construction. Combined with a stated desire to maintain the downtown core as the dominant centre, weak economic

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4. Northwest Edmonton Town Centre Impact Study, Edmonton, Alberta, Urbanics Consultants Ltd., 1982.

5. Mill Woods Town Centre; Development Potential Study, Edmonton, Alberta; Development Consulting Group Ltd., October, 1986.

growth has countered the effect of decentralization policies originally put forward in the GMP. The results have been: partially developed town centres, at different scales, and within different time frames than originally envisioned in the GMP and Area Structure Plans. Indications are that town centres will continue to develop, however with much less emphasis on the office space component and much more on the retail uses. The effect will be somewhat different from the tightly integrated multi-use concept, however the centres will continue to serve as a focal point for their respective trade areas.

V CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

1. Town centres have not developed as anticipated in the 1980 GMP in several key areas:

   - A major component, suburban office space, has not developed, and is not expected to develop in any significant amount in the foreseeable future. Slow economic growth has led to an oversupply situation, causing downtown office space to remain strongly competitive with suburban projects. Furthermore, experience in other centres suggests that major office developments adjacent to regional shopping centres are restricted to the largest of Canadian centres.

   - Other municipal investments such as institutional, recreational, and LRT facilities have been delayed until the development of a minimum population threshold.

   - The strength of the retail component, a key factor in the attractiveness of the centre, is a function of the size, strength and stage of development of the local trade area. In developing neighbourhoods, any regional retail centre is usually planned to come on stream after trade area development is largely complete.

   - Growth rates, and the timing of development have been a major factor in slowing the implementation of the town centre concept in Edmonton, exaggerating its inherent long term nature.

   Another factor has been the development of competing locations for goods and services. This phenomenon, coupled with the long term nature of town centres, has weakened their market position, further extending the required timeframe. The 1980 GMP recognized this issue, stressing that if the town centre concept was to be effectively supported, then strict regulation of regional shopping centres would be required. (Policy report #6, 2.6, p.6.7). Protection of the town centres' market requires a degree of market intervention that the City has so far been unwilling to support.

2. In spite of partial realization, the concept still has validity for Edmonton for the following reasons:

   - Town centres represent a valid organizing principle for suburban development. The centres were to be focal points for developing areas. The three existing centres presently serve this role.

   - The existing centres represent a substantial commitment by the City and the private sector in terms of statutory plan policy, land allocation and transportation linkages.

   - Town centres are long term developments whose components develop independently in response to separate market conditions. Six years is not enough time to pronounce judgement on the success or failure of the concept.

   - Town centres are presently functioning adequately without all of the anticipated components.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The town centre concept should be reaffirmed. Town centres represent a major opportunity to provide a focal point for the delivery of services to the suburbs.

2. The current policy approach should be modified. The GMP differentiates between centres only on the basis of size: "regional" and "smaller" centres are shown on Map 6.3. Centre - specific policies should address the individual potential of each centre on the basis of size, function, mix and integration of uses.

3. The issues of timing and commitment must be examined. Proposed centres may have 20+ year time horizons. It is difficult to forecast accurately over such a period of time, and yet the long term nature of these centres requires a strong commitment in order to protect the necessary lands, and markets, to ensure viability.